Renville-Sibley
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

July 2018 Vol. 19 No. 3

Cooperative Connections

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Line Crew Activities

Gene Allex
Line Superintendent
gallex@renville-sibley.coop

A late season snow storm backed up the construction schedule by a couple of weeks. I'm sure everyone loved the 18 inches of snow in mid-April! This construction season is the third year in the scheduled work plan. The line crew has completed several contingency projects in this work plan as well as a county road improvement project. In addition, the crew is continuing to work on overhead-to-underground conversion projects.

The physical GIS data collection of our system is primarily complete. Renville-Sibley contracted Star Energy out of Alexandria to collect this data. Each pole was tagged with a number for inventory and mapping purposes. Members may have seen Star Energy representatives out on four-wheelers collecting this data.

Renville-Sibley linemen started the year with overhead line patrol. This is a requirement of the work plan and is very beneficial in finding any deficiencies on the system. Items the linemen look for while patrolling the line include: loose connections, tree conditions, pole conditions, proper signage and animal protection equipment. Service orders are then generated from this patrol to fix any deficiencies. Typically, the linemen will discover several poles that need replacement during this process.

Annual inspection of equipment is also completed in the winter months. Federal requirements state that trucks more than 26,000 lbs. need DOT inspections as well as any trailer in combination with these trucks. The booms on these trucks are tested annually for strength and dielectric. Preparations are made for line construction and maintenance work including ordering material and any small equipment needing replacement or repair for the upcoming construction season. 941800

Throughout February and March, the linemen cut and grubbed trees on portions of the system as needed. The tree cutting program, in conjunction with underground taps, is reducing tree-related outages. The service orders generated from the line patrol were also addressed in these months. This year, the lack of snow in February and March made for good working conditions.

Once the ground began to thaw in April, the linemen started changing poles discovered to be deficient during line patrol and the GIS data collection. The linemen also completed regulator maintenance left over from the 2017 season and began the planned 2018 maintenance. The snow that came in April allowed us to come back inside and do some house cleaning in our facilities.

The construction season started in May. So far, the linemen have worked on overhead-to-underground conversions in the Gibbon/Fairfax area and will then move to the Danube and Renville areas to begin other projects including more overhead-to-underground conversions.

One of our system projects is to connect the Honnor Substation (near North Redwood) with the Henryville Substation (near Bechyn). The linemen will be building overhead line on existing transmission poles in the Minnesota River bottom by North Redwood. This is a new three-phase tie line in one segment and a single-phase to three-phase upgrade in another. East River Electric will work with us on a possible re-model of the Henryville Substation security fence.

There have been a fair number of member-requested service upgrades. Any member thinking about a service upgrade should contact Renville-Sibley as early as possible to prevent lead time on material issues. Renville-Sibley will review projects as requested by members and will return a quote as soon as possible. Renville-Sibley may have questions for members during this process. Examples may include: How much load are you adding? Are you moving or building a new service? Who do you use for an electrician? etc. The Minnesota electrical inspector is required to visit the site if there are any changes or alterations to the service.

Renville-Sibley crews work on a line.

Even though Renville-Sibley is installing more underground to farm sites and removing many of the obstructions that intrude into farm fields, please remember to leave a clearance between farm equipment and the poles and green transformer boxes along the right-of-way. Each spring and fall we are called to repair poles and anchors damaged by tillage equipment or conductor that has been hit while unfolding booms or diggers. Always remember to look up and work safely around electrical equipment along roads, driveways and in the farm yards.

Renville-Sibley has a contracted locating service to locate our utilities. Often a member will ask, "Why didn't the lines get marked in my yard?" Renville-Sibley owns the lines from the distribution system to the meter and the member owns any lines after the meter. Renville-Sibley will help locate member-owned underground lines in the overhead-to-underground conversion project. However, because the lines after the meter are owned by the member, it is the member's responsibility to locate these lines. Any member-owned locating request should be done by the member's chosen electrician. In addition, always call Gopher State One Call (GSOC) at least 48 hours before doing any type of excavation. The GSOC phone number is 1-800-252-1166 or go to www.gopherstateonecall.org.

Have a safe and wonderful summer!

Renville-Sibley
Cooperative Connections

(USPS 019-074)

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Web site: www.renville-sibley.coop

Members attending the 2018 Basin Electric tour will have a chance to see giant drag lines in action.

Last Call

to Visit Beautiful North Dakota!

Renville-Sibley is excited to offer a trip-of-a-lifetime to beautiful North Dakota. On this three-day trip, you will learn all about how the electricity you depend on every day is generated.

Guests will strap on a hard hat as we walk the corridors of Antelope Valley Station. This is one of the power plants that generates your electricity and you will see how this happens! Another stop will be at the Coteau Properties Freedom Mine, which delivers the coal to Antelope Valley Station so they can generate your power. Weather permitting, the bus will go right into the coal mine giving you an up close and personal view of the draglines at work. Also on the agenda is a stop at Garrison Dam and Powerhouse. At the Garrison Dam, you will hear how the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manages this multi-purpose project including hydro-electric power production, irrigation, flood damage reduction amongst a host of other projects.

All this, and possibly some sightseeing in North Dakota, can be yours by calling the office to get your name on the guest list. The trip will take place July 25-27. The first and last day of the tour are travel days with a lot of fun mixed in. Motor coach transportation will be provided by Thielen Travel out of Redwood Falls. Breakfast and noon meals, along with your room for two nights, will be provided by the cooperative. Guests are responsible for their evening meals. We invite all members who have not taken this tour before to travel with us. The cost is $15/person or $25/couple or family (staying in the same room). Families with children over 8 years old are welcome to attend.

If you would like to sign-up for this tour, give Lenae a call at the office or e-mail her at lwordes@renville-sibley.coop.

Comparative Report

	Current (through Apr. 30)	One Year Ago (through Apr. 30)	10 Years Ago (through Apr. 30)
Average No. of Consumers	1,882	1,890	1,969
kWhs Purchased	74,910,530	64,412,505	67,258,516
Cost of Purchased Power	$4,660,071.29	$4,089,685.36	$2,189,615.72

Safety Before and After Storms

Severe storms are more common in the spring and summer, but they can occur any time of year. Be prepared for storms and know how to stay safe.

Before the storm:

- Assemble a kit of essentials, like water, battery-operated flashlights, and radios. Keep a list of emergency phone numbers, including the electric utility.
- If severe weather is on its way, pay attention to local weather reports and recommendations. A tornado or severe storm watch means conditions are favorable for those weather conditions forming. A warning means dangerous weather conditions are imminent.
- Lightning can travel up to 10 miles away from a storm, so seek shelter when you hear thunder.
- Consider installing ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) or purchasing a portable GFCI. GFCIs detect dangerous electrical situations and cut off power before a person can be shocked. These dangerous electrical situations are likely to occur around water, so GFCIs should be installed in bathrooms, laundry rooms, kitchens, basements and outdoors – anywhere water and electricity may meet.
- If power goes out, switch off lights, large electronics and appliances to prevent overloading circuits and damaging appliances when power is restored. Leave one lamp or switch on as a signal for when your power returns.

After the storm:

- When venturing outside, stay away from downed power lines and be alert to the possibility that tree limbs or debris may hide an electrical hazard. Assume any dangling wires you encounter are energized and dangerous. Warn others to stay away and contact the electric utility.
- If you are driving and come upon a downed power line, stay in your vehicle, warn others to stay away and contact emergency personnel or electric utility. Also, when driving, be careful at intersections where traffic lights may be out. Stop at all railroad crossings and treat road intersections with traffic signals as a four-way stop before proceeding with caution.
- Before re-entering storm-damaged buildings or rooms, be sure all electric and gas services are turned off. Never attempt to turn off power at the breaker box if you must stand in water to do so. If you can't reach your breaker box safely, call your electric utility to shut off power at the meter.
- Never step into a flooded basement or other area if water is covering electrical outlets, appliances or cords. Be alert to any electrical equipment that could be energized and in contact with water. Never touch electrical appliances, cords or wires while you are wet or standing in water.
- Do not use water-damaged electric items until a qualified electrician has inspected them and ensured they are safe.
- When using a portable generator, follow all manufacturers' recommendations. Keep the generator dry and never plug it into a wall outlet or directly into the home's wiring. This could inadvertently energize the utility lines and injure yourself or others working to restore power.
- A permanent standby generator should be professionally installed and include a transfer switch to prevent electricity from leaving your generator and going into power lines where it can kill line workers.

Source: safeelectricity.org

KIDS CORNER SAFETY POSTER

"Don't fly kites near power lines."

Sophia Bad Warrior, Second-grader at Dupree Public School

Sophia is the daughter of Dugan and Peg Bad Warrior, Dupree, S.D. They are members of Moreau-Grand Electric Cooperative, Timber Lake, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents. Colored drawings are encouraged.

Delectable Desserts

Rhubarb Dessert

1 white cake mix
4 cups diced rhubarb
1 cup sugar
1 (3 oz.) pkg. strawberry jello
Whipped topping

Prepare cake according to package directions. Spread in a 9x13-inch pan. Layer rhubarb over cake batter. Sprinkle with sugar and dry jello. Bake at 350°F. for 35 to 40 minutes. Serve with Cool Whip.

Pam Hofer, Carpenter, SD

Best Ever Chocolate Chip Cookies

1 cup white sugar
1 cup brown sugar
2 cups butter-flavored Crisco
2 eggs
2 tsp. vanilla
2 tsp. baking soda
2 tsp. cream of tarter
2 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. salt
3-1/2 cups flour
12 oz. chocolate chips

Cream together the first 5 ingredients; add next 5 ingredients. Stir in chocolate chips. Bake on air bake pan at 350°F. for 10 to 12 minutes. Let set a few minutes before removing from pan.

Sharon Sunvold, Renville, MN

Honey Bun Cake

1 yellow cake mix
4 eggs
2/3 cup vegetable oil
1 (8 oz.) container sour cream
1 cup brown sugar
1 T. cinnamon

Icing:

1-1/2 cups powdered sugar
3 T. butter, melted
2 T. milk (or to desired consistency)

Combine cake mix, eggs, oil and sour cream. Pour 1/2 of batter into a greased 9x13-inch pan. Mix together brown sugar and cinnamon; sprinkle over batter in prepared pan. Pour remaining batter over top of cinnamon mixture. Run a butter knife through to marble the batter. Bake at 350°F. for 45 minutes. Let cake set 5 minutes, then frost with icing. For icing, mix together powdered sugar, butter and milk; pour over cake. Let cool at least 30 minutes before serving.

Sheryl Fromm, Hartford, SD

Raspberry Almond Crumb Bars

2-1/2 cups flour
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
1 egg
1 tsp. McCormick® Pure Almond Extract
3/4 cup (1-1/2 sticks) cold butter, cut into chunks
1 cup raspberry preserves
1/2 cup sliced almonds

Mix flour, sugars, baking soda and salt in food processor until well blended. Add butter; pulse until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Mix egg and almond extract in small bowl. Add to food processor while pulsing. Reserve 1/3 of crumb mixture for topping. Press remaining crumb mixture into an even layer in foil-lined 9x13-inch baking pan. Spread raspberry preserves over top. Sprinkle clumps of the reserved crumb mixture over preserves. Sprinkle with almonds. Bake at 350°F. 35 to 40 minutes or until edges are lightly browned. Cool in pan on wire rack. Cut into bars. Makes 24 servings.

Nutritional Information Per Serving: Calories 175, Total Fat 7g, Sodium 129mg, Cholesterol 23mg, Carbohydrates 26g, Protein 2g, Dietary Fiber 1g

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Mother's Day Pie

1 cup sugar
2 T. all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp. salt
6 T. butter, melted
1 tsp. vanilla extract
3 eggs
1 (12 oz.) can evaporated milk
1 cup shredded coconut

In a medium bowl, combine sugar, flour and salt. Stir in butter and vanilla extract. Add eggs, one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Mix in evaporated milk followed by coconut. Pour into a greased and floured 9-inch pie plate or quiche pan. Bake at 325°F. for 35 to 40 minutes or until custard is nearly set and a knife inserted in center comes out clean. Let cool. Refrigerate before serving.

Joy Hagen, Webster, SD

Please send your favorite salad, garden produce and pasta recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in December 2018. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Where's the Number?

Last month, Shawn Ledeboer did not find his member number in the newsletter. The credit will increase to a value of $40. If you find your number and call the office by July 3, you will receive this credit on your electric statement. Good luck in your search!

FREE Want Ad Service

Members can submit ads for the following categories: Giveaway, For Sale, For Rent and Wanted. Ads should be or are limited to no more than 15 words and must be received by the first of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter. Renville-Sibley reserves the right to edit content or exclude ads due to space restrictions. Ads will be run one time only unless resubmitted. Please complete the following information and mail to the Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power, PO Box 68, Danube, MN 56230.

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Phone number: _____

Ad to be placed (limit of 15 words per ad)

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Type of ad: ☐ Giveaway ☐ For Sale ☐ For Rent ☐ Wanted

Thank you...

Renville-Sibley employees would like to thank the following members:

- **Darlene Konz –** for the cookies brought to the office
- **Kelly Albrecht –** for the cookies to celebrate Linemen's Appreciation Day
- **Gary & Kris Peterson –** for the bars brought in for Linemen's Appreciation Day
- **Ron & Sara Homan –** for providing lunch for Shawn, Brian, Anthony & Connor
- **Nathan Homan –** for helping the linemen move some dirt around
- **Connie Tautges –** for giving Shawn, Brian, Connor and Anthony ice cream.

Thank you for choosing me to be the recipient of the Basin Electric scholarship. I am honored and will be putting it toward earning a degree in engineering. Thanks again for your generosity and continued support of high school graduates.
Ryan Albrecht

RENVILLE SIBLEY CO-OP POWER

Mission Statement:

Renville-Sibley Cooperative Power Association will provide efficient, reliable electric energy and services to enhance the quality of rural living.

For Sale:

Case-IH 1020 – 20 ft bean head, always shedded, with head mover.
Daryl Wendt, Gibbon, MN
507-327-8101

Outage Report

affecting 10 members or more

Date: 5-24-18
Time off: 4:31 p.m.
Time on: 6:06 p.m.
Substation: Crooks
Cause: Substation equipment failure

Date: 5-24-18
Time off: 4:32 p.m.
Time on: 5:30 p.m.
Substation: Emmet
Cause: Power supplier outage

Please contact Renville-Sibley's office for more details about these power outages.

Gopher State One Call

May Board Meeting Highlights

The May board meeting was held on Thursday, May 31, at 8 a.m. All board members were present except Alan Neyers. Others present were CEO DeeAnne Newville, Gene Allex and Lenae Wordes.

The following items were reviewed and approved by the board:

- Minutes of the April board meeting
- Operating and disbursement reports for the month of April
- Purchase of a new large bucket truck
- Safety report for May
- Allocation of 2017 margins
- Donation to CFC Cooperative System Integrity Fund
- Cooperative Attorney Services Agreement

The board reviewed:

- List of new members and capital credits transferred
- Reports from staff members as to the activities in their department. Items in the reports include:
  - High level Statement of Operations review – YTD – April 2018 (unaudited)
  - Organization activities
  - East River update
  - NRECA update
  - MREA update
  - Line crew work in progress and pending work
  - Accounts receivable
  - Basin Electric tour
  - Scholar of the Year banquet
- Upcoming meetings were discussed.

Please contact the Renville-Sibley office if you would like more information regarding the board meeting.

Notice:
The June board meeting will be held on Thursday, June 21, 2018, at 8 a.m. The July board meeting will be held on Monday, July 30, 2018, at 8 am.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Here's a cool tip for your fridge! Cover liquids and wrap foods stored in your refrigerator. Uncovered foods release moisture, causing the compressor to work harder.

Source: energy.gov

New and emerging technologies are continuously offering innovative ways to effectively manage and reduce energy consumption. Unfortunately, not all technologies can live up to their hype. Your local electric co-op can help you navigate these emerging technologies and provide the most cost-effective and beneficial energy management solutions.

NAVIGATING

Emerging Efficiency Technologies

Kaley Lockwood
National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Investing in energy efficient technology is becoming an increasingly attractive way to cut costs for homeowners and renters alike. This rings true especially in the deep heat of summer. Hotter days often result in higher energy bills, partially due to A/C units working overtime to keep homes cooled and comfortable.

Electric cooperatives know it's important to help our members navigate these emerging technologies and provide the most cost-effective and beneficial energy management solutions.

New and emerging technologies are continuously offering innovative ways to effectively manage and reduce a home's energy consumption. Smart thermostats, for example, have proven their worth in shaving 10 to 15 percent off an average home's electric bill. These thermostats, in time, will effectively pay for themselves which make them an attractive option to many. Unfortunately, not all technologies can live up to their hype and some even come with side effects that can arguably overshadow their benefits.

The Mistbox Air Conditioner Cooler is one such technology. Mistbox claims to save its customers between 20 to 38 percent on their electricity bills. This technology requires a simple installation to a home's outdoor A/C unit and works by spraying a mist to precool the air around the unit. In using this evaporative cooling method, you're a/C unit theoretically doesn't have to work as hard to pump cool air into your home. This may be beneficial when air temperature is at its highest. In the short term Mistbox may work, but there are some real caveats that need to be considered.

A primary point of concern is that an A/C unit is not designed to be sprayed down with such frequency. Although the Mistbox system comes with a water filter, the company only recommends using its technology if your home's water has a hardness less than 500 parts per million. This automatically rules out anyone who uses well water. Even if you do have a home with the required water hardness, the filtration system can't completely prevent your system from rusting. Corrosion will occur resulting in a damaged unit.

Electric cooperatives know it's important to help our members navigate these emerging technologies and provide the most cost-effective and beneficial energy management solutions. If you're interested in taking steps to become more energy efficient, we recommend these tried and true tips:

- Clean and change the filters on your HVAC system regularly to make your unit run more efficiently, keeping your house cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.
- In spring and summer months, set your ceiling fans to turn in the counterclockwise direction to create a cool breeze. In autumn and winter months, set your fan to turn in the clockwise direction. This will redistribute warm air throughout the room.
- Add caulk or weather stripping to seal air leaks around leaky doors and windows.
- Insulation is important. Properly insulating your home reduces heating and cooling costs, and improves comfort.
- Remember, there are easy steps you can take now to improve the energy efficiency of your home. To learn about additional ways to save, contact the energy experts at your local electric cooperative.

Kaley Lockwood writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

Gerry Seehusen shares his insight on life with those in attendance at the Scholar of the Year banquet.

Scholar of the Year Selected

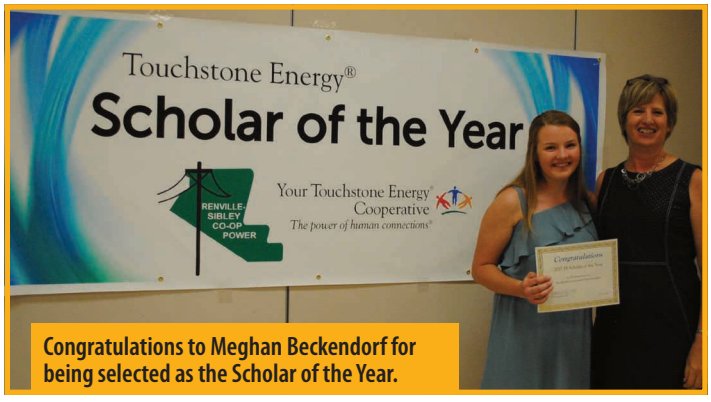
SCHOLARS HONORED AT ANNUAL BANQUET

Lenae Wordes

lwordes@renville-sibley.coop

On Wednesday evening, May 30, eight recent high school graduates, their family members and several high school teachers met at the Danube Community Center for the Scholar of the Year banquet. Gerald Seehusen, a member of Renville-Sibley Cooperative, was the guest speaker. Gerry shared some life lessons and points for the students to ponder as they take the next step in their life journey. Everyone enjoyed a delicious meal served from Main Street Café in Danube.

If you remember, each month during the school year Renville-Sibley has featured a high school senior as the Scholar of the Month in the *Cooperative Connections* newsletter. The student was also featured on local radio stations and in their local newspaper. As a Touchstone Energy Cooperative, Renville-Sibley was founded on the four pillars of Integrity, Accountability, Innovation and Commitment to Community. These students were nominated by a teacher at one of our area high schools because they felt the student demonstrated these same values. A $100 donation was given to the school of the selected student with the student determining how the funds were to be distributed.



Congratulations to Meghan Beckendorf for being selected as the Scholar of the Year.

Renville-Sibley hosted the Scholar of the Year banquet to recognize each of these students. One student was selected, in a random drawing, as the Scholar of the Year. That student then received a $1,000 scholarship. To be eligible for the scholarship, the scholars needed to be present at the banquet. This year, the winner of the scholarship was Meghan Beckendorf, a recent graduate from Renville County West High School.

The following is a list of scholars selected each month and the school organization they choose for their $100 donation:

Month	Scholar	School Organization
September	Trent Kjersten	Baseball Team
October	Emma Rice	English Department
November	Carly Orwick	National Honor Society
December	Ellie Greenwaldt	Chapel Program
January	Sarah Hoff	Science Department
February	Meghan Beckendorf	FFA
March	Riley Cronen	National Honor Society
April	Ellie Thein	National Honor Society

Renville-Sibley is pleased to recognize our outstanding high school seniors and to assist the schools of the selected students with a donation each month. The cooperative looks forward to another year of offering the Touchstone Energy Scholar of the Month program.

Minnesota's Extreme Heat Law

Minnesota Statute 216B.0975 requires that, "a utility may not involuntarily disconnect residential services in affected counties when an excessive heat watch, heat advisory, or excessive heat warning is in effect and has been issued by the National Weather Service."

Renville-Sibley will continue to make efforts to stall involuntary disconnection of our members' electric service for non-payment and will continue to provide our members with past-due accounts the opportunity to work out a feasible payment schedule. However, in order to construct a payment plan, members must contact Renville-Sibley ahead of time to make payment arrangements.

Renville-Sibley does not want to interrupt service to any member at any time, but in a cooperative, all members are affected by those whose electric bills remain unpaid. To ensure fair and equitable rates for all our members, members with past-due accounts who neglect to contact the office to make mutually agreed upon payment arrangement, or members who fail to meet agreed upon payment arrangements, will have their electric service disconnected once the excessive heat watch, advisory or warning has expired.

For energy assistance, please contact:

- **Renville County Energy Assistance**
  320-523-5522 (Olivia)
- **Minnesota Valley Action Council**
  800-767-7139 (Mankato) or
  507-237-2981 (Gaylord)
- **United Community Action Partnership**
  507-537-1416 (Marshall)
  320-235-0850 (Willmar)
  320-523-1842 (Olivia)
  507-637-2187 (Redwood Falls)
- **Prairie Five Community Action Council**
  320-269-6578 (Montevideo)

Rick Ferguson is retired after 20 years with Renville-Sibley Co-op Power.

Renville-Sibley Co-op Power's

Rick Ferguson Retires

Rick Ferguson decided to retire from his position as Warehouseman after 20 years of service with Renville-Sibley. Rick was a "jack of all trades" at the cooperative with the majority of his time spent on facility maintenance and inventory. He also assisted the linecrew with many projects and power outages over the years.

When asked about the changes he has seen over those 20 years, Rick commented that the price of equipment and material for the cooperative has significantly increased. With most of our members involved in farming, the size of their farm equipment has changed and the amount of crop being produced each year has increased. Therefore, members have an increased demand for energy. The result is Renville-Sibley has had to installed larger services for members to meet their electrical needs. Of course, technology has also changed during those 20 years. The types of meters used when Rick first started were analog and the members read their own meter. Now most of the meters are read automatically from the office.

Rick is thankful for the good people he has worked with over the years. He now looks forward to tackling some of the items on the honey-do list and possibly spending more time in warmer weather instead of dealing with the cold Minnesota winter. Renville-Sibley thanks Rick for his dedication to the cooperative and wish him the best in his retirement.

Thank you Rick for your dedication to Renville-Sibley Cooperative.

Energy Audits

Savings You Can Count On

Derrill Holly

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Better energy efficiency at home starts with savings, not sales, and an energy audit conducted by a trained energy advisor can help you get there.

"Members are our community and we are the experts in the electric energy arena," said Manuela Heyn, an energy services representative for Gulf Coast Electric Cooperative, who is also a member of the Southport, Florida-based Co-op. "We have the tools, knowledge and commitment to assist our people. Saving energy can also help shave peak loads."

Heyn conducted her first energy audits with very basic tools: a flashlight, laser temperature gun and candy thermometer (to check water heater output temperature). She now has access to more sophisticated equipment such as thermal imaging equipment.

Members become frantic when they see a major increase in the power bill and want almost immediate answers as to why. In conjunction with experience and the ability to refer to meter data reports, the process of identifying major power consumption problems has been simplified and resolved in many instances in the office.

During on-site audits, she uses all her senses to find abnormalities such as hot water line leaks, running well pumps, damaged power cords, construction issues – one case leading to spongy drywall, disconnected ducts and lack of insulation to name a few.

She also checks household systems many homeowners seldom see or consider unless they spend time with their HVAC technician.

"One home I visited had an overflowing air handler water pan and extreme fungal growth" said Heyn. "Some members, particularly renters, don't realize that their HVAC systems have an air filter. When they are dirty, they can freeze up the system and cause an increase in power consumption."

Expert advice

Many of the electric co-ops that provide energy audits support professional development for energy advisors that includes exposure to building science concepts.

Training focused on both new construction techniques designed to improve energy efficiency and retrofitting options for upgraded older housing are common. Specialized training for multi-family units and manufactured housing are also common.

"By providing a picture of how energy is used in the home, people can concentrate on what can save them the most energy," said Eileen Wysocki, an energy auditor with Holy Cross Energy, headquartered in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.

Wysocki starts with a baseload estimate of energy use based upon meter data. Talking with the consumer-member, she learns about household size and behavior patterns, and considers seasonal factors like heat tape used to prevent water lines from freezing.

"We have many 'second homes' in our service territory," said Wysocki, adding that even when those homes are empty, energy use continues. "Fan coil blower motors, whole house humidi-

fiers, boiler pumps, ventilation systems, driveway snowmelt pumps, pool pumps, hot tubs, garage heaters, heated toilet seats and towel bars are using energy, regardless of occupancy."

The co-op serves Colorado's popular ski areas around Aspen and Vail, and is currently designing a new audit form. It will stress benefits members can receive through efficiency upgrades, including comfort, said Mary Wiener, energy efficiency program administrator for Holy Cross Energy.

Co-ops that offer energy audits use the service to reinforce their roles as trusted energy advisors, helping members save energy in an effort to help them control their electricity costs.

While some co-ops provide complementary audits free of charge, especially when they are requested in response to high bill concerns, others may charge a small fee, offering rebates to members who implement some of the recommendations provided.

Time spent with an energy auditor can help a member avoid ineffective upgrades or the purchase of outsized equipment that might not improve their comfort or produce savings through recoverable costs.

Offering solutions

An energy advisor's home visit usually gets far more attention than a brief discussion about energy efficiency at a co-op district meeting, a county fair or other community event. Most audits are initiated following a request tied to high bill concerns, when members are really motivated to control their energy costs.

On average, a member can reduce their energy use by about 5 percent if they follow the low-cost or no-cost advice given during the audit.

On average, a member can reduce their energy use by about 5 percent if they follow the low-cost or no-cost advice given during the audit. Additional savings of up to 20 percent can be achieved by addressing issues with big-ticket items, such as HVAC replacement, attic insulation or major duct repair discovered during the audit.

Improved energy efficiency not only helps the co-op control peak demand and wholesale power costs, it also provides opportunities to discuss services available to members. Those include rebates, weatherization programs and payment assistance.

To learn more about energy audits available to you, contact your local electric cooperative.

Derrill Holly writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing more than 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56 percent of the nation's landscape.

Energy Audits Point the Way to Savings

Conducting an energy audit of your home is a great way to identify opportunities for energy savings. Below are five areas an auditor will typically cover.

- **Leaks and Losses:** Damaged, missing or improperly installed insulation can increase energy use year-round. Knowing where and how to check can identify problems.
- **Comfort Costs:** A visual inspection of your thermostat, water heater, heating and air conditioning equipment and ductwork, can identify performance problems.
- **Assessing Appliances:** The age, condition, location and use patterns for washers, dryers, refrigerators, and other major appliances can impact their efficiency levels.
- **Learning Lighting:** A quick discussion about lighting options with an energy auditor can take the guesswork out of choosing the best bulbs and fixtures.
- **Activity Adjustments:** Knowing how and when you use energy can help you save money. Shifting the time of day you use energy to do things (like laundry and cooking) to cooler, less humid hours can ease the load on HVAC systems.

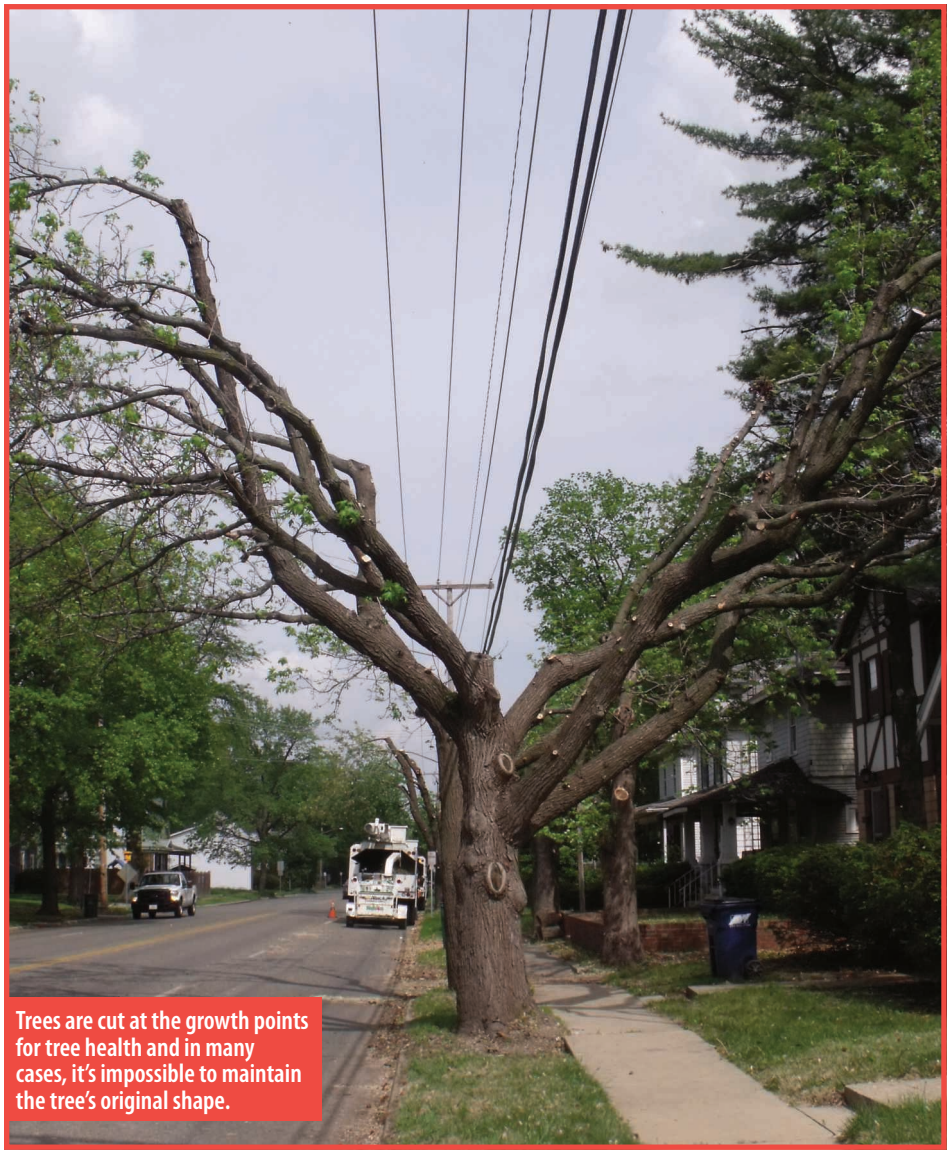
Proper Tree Pruning Around Power Lines

Safe Electricity

SafeElectricity.org

Trees beautify our yards, provide us with shade and naturally attract climbing children. However, when trees grow to interfere with power lines, they become safety hazards and are among the most common causes for utility outages.

With millions of miles of electric lines that give power to homes and businesses throughout the U.S., there are numerous trees growing near or into lines that require trimming and management. Usually, it's because a tall-growing tree was planted directly under or too close to the line. It might have grown taller than the person who planted it expected. Whatever the reason, it is crucial they are a safe distance from the lines and proper pruning techniques preserve tree health. Only trained professionals should trim trees near power lines!



Trees are cut at the growth points for tree health and in many cases, it's impossible to maintain the tree's original shape.

Trees growing in utility right-of-ways are maintained by the electric utility, while trees growing into power lines on private property are usually the responsibility of the owner. When hiring someone to prune in those cases, be aware that most tree-care workers are not qualified to work around energized power lines. According to the Utility Arborist Association (UAA), utility line clearance professionals that meet Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) qualifications are the only ones legally permitted to work within 10 feet of lines or work on a tree that has branches that are within 10 feet of a power line.

Trees are cut at the growth points for tree health and in many cases, it's impossible to maintain the tree's original shape. Some trees require directional pruning to keep them from growing back into lines. Trees directly underneath power lines may appear to be in a 'V' or 'U' shape with lines passing through the opening in the middle, while trees growing alongside a power line may appear to be in a 'L' shape or one side may be completely missing due to side pruning. The shape of the tree will be different, but the health and safety of the tree stay intact and safety and reliability related to the power lines ensured.

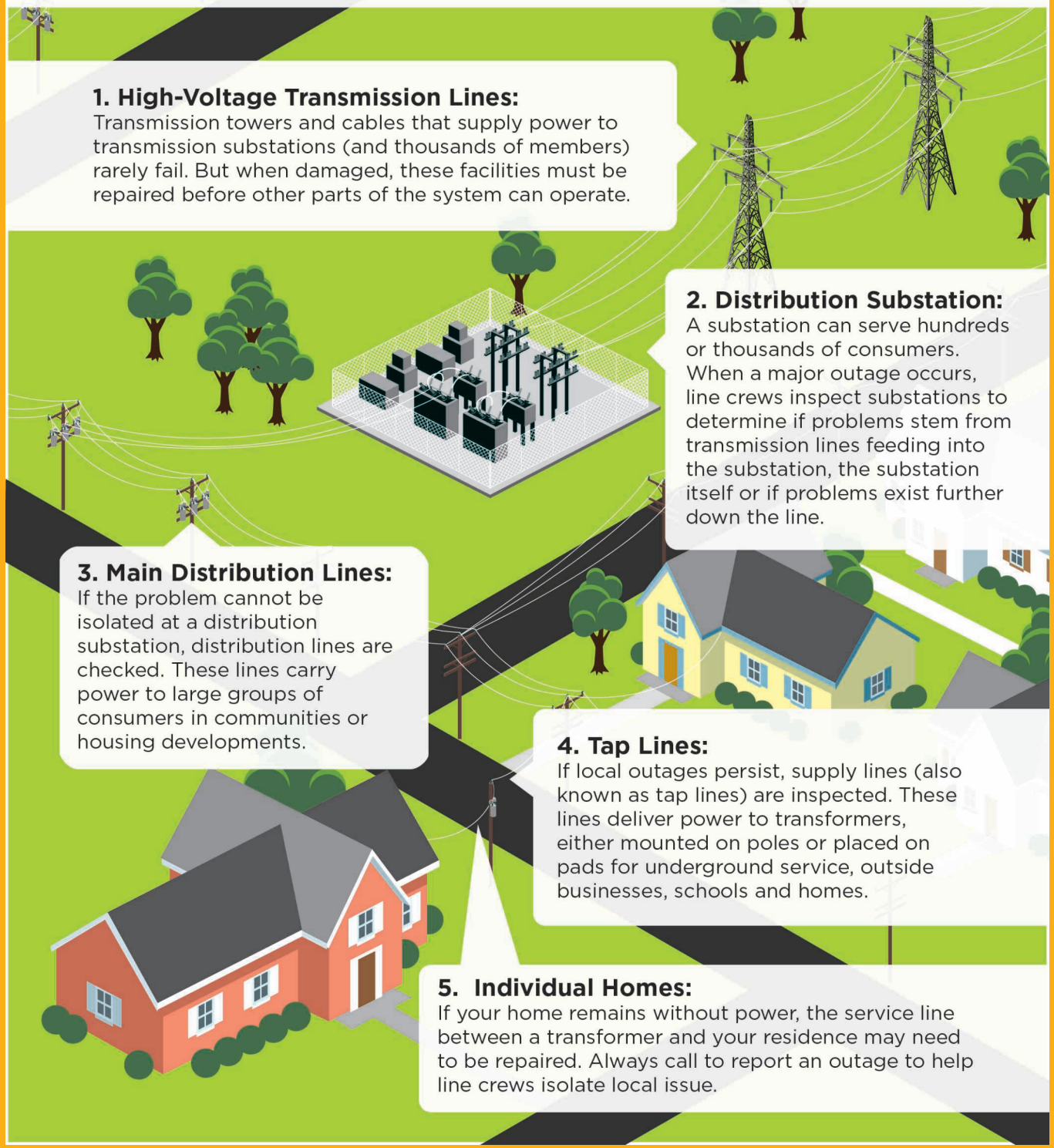
Pruning a tree will solve the problem a lot of the time, but in some cases, the tree must be removed. Those include tall or fast growing species that are directly under power lines, large previously topped trees under the power lines, saplings with potential to grow in or around the lines and hazardous trees that may be leaning, in decline, cracked or split.

Property owners may choose to replace a problem tree with a new one. There are many varieties of shorter-growing trees that provide beauty, shade and screening and will never grow to interfere with power lines. Your local tree nursery can help with selection of trees and shrubs appropriate for landscaping around power lines and electrical equipment.

For more information, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Powering Up After an Outage

When the power goes out, we expect it to be restored within a few hours. But when a major storm or natural disaster causes widespread damage, extended outages may result. Our line crews work long, hard hours to restore service safely to the greatest number of consumers in the shortest time possible. Here's what's going on if you find yourself in the dark:



1. High-Voltage Transmission Lines:
Transmission towers and cables that supply power to transmission substations (and thousands of members) rarely fail. But when damaged, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

2. Distribution Substation:
A substation can serve hundreds or thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself or if problems exist further down the line.

3. Main Distribution Lines:
If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of consumers in communities or housing developments.

4. Tap Lines:
If local outages persist, supply lines (also known as tap lines) are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools and homes.

5. Individual Homes:
If your home remains without power, the service line between a transformer and your residence may need to be repaired. Always call to report an outage to help line crews isolate local issue.

June 21-23
Crystal Springs Rodeo, Clear Lake, SD, 605-874-2996

June 21-23
Senior Games, Mitchell, SD, Contact Howard Bich at 605-491-0635

June 22-23
Oahe Days Arts & Music Festival, Pierre, SD, oahedaysinfo@gmail.com

June 22-24
Annual Main Street Arts and Crafts Festival, Hot Springs, SD, 605-440-2738

June 29
Naja Shrine Circus, Wall, SD, 605-342-3402

June 29-July 1
Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Annual Wacipi, Agency Village, SD, 605-698-8284

June 30
Naja Shrine Circus, Deadwood, SD, 605-342-3402

June 30-July 1
Archeology Awareness Days, Mitchell, SD, 605-996-5473

June 30-July 1
The Great Outdoor Festival, Pierre, SD, 605-224-7361

June 30-July 4
99th Annual Black Hills Roundup, Belle Fourche, SD, 605-723-2010

July 1
Naja Shrine Circus, Lemmon, SD, 605-342-3402

July 2-4
Sitting Bull Stampede Rodeo, Mobridge, SD, 605-845-2387

July 3-5
Frontier Days Rodeo, Interior, SD, 605-455-1000

July 29: 13th Annual Langford Car Show, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., trophies awarded at 1:30, Park of the Pines, Langford, SD, Contact Russell Nickelson at 605-493-6597

Photo courtesy: Langford SD Facebook Page

July 6-7
Senior Games, Madison, SD, Contact Bernie Schuurmans at 605-270-3327

July 6-8, 13-15, 20-22
Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant, 8 p.m., Pageant Site, De Smet, SD, 800-880-3383

July 7, 21, Aug. 25, Sept. 8, 22
Lawn Mower Races, Pukwana, SD, 605-680-1718 or 605-682-9781

July 10-15
4th Annual 3 Wheeler Rally, Deadwood, SD, 605-717-7174, www.d3wr.com

July 12-15
Hot Harley Nights, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-334-2721

July 13-14
Senior Games, Aberdeen, SD, Contact Gene Morsching at 605-216-2822

July 14
Cruiser Car Show and Street Fair, Rapid City, SD, 605-716-7979

July 14-15
Summer Arts Festival, Brookings, SD, 605-692-2787

July 17-22
Corn Palace Stampede Rodeo, Mitchell, SD, 605-770-4919

July 18-21
Black Hills Corvette Classic, Spearfish, SD, 605-759-4530

July 18-21
Senior Games, Rapid City, SD, Contact Kristi Lintz at 605-394-4168

July 20-21
Senior Games, Brookings, SD, Contact Traci Saugstad at 605-692-4492

July 20-21
Gumbo Ridge Bronc Ride and Ranch Rodeo, Murdo, SD, 605-669-3031

July 20-21
JazzFest, Sioux Falls, SD, 605-335-6101

July 20-21
Storybook Land Festival, Aberdeen, SD, 605-626-7015

July 20-22
Annual Gem & Mineral Show, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center, Rapid City, SD, 605-269-2015

July 20-22
Stampede Rodeo, Burke, SD, 605-830-0304

July 21
Annual Heritage Music Fest, Elk Point, SD, 605-366-9466

August 12
Czech Heritage Festival, Bechyn, MN 320-522-1218, www.bechynczechfest.org

To have your event listed on this page, send complete information, including date, event, place and contact to your local electric cooperative. Include your name, address and daytime telephone number. Information must be submitted at least eight weeks prior to your event. Please call ahead to confirm date, time and location of event.